

House Bill 38
Tuesday, March 6, 2007
Presented by M. Jeff Hagener
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Jeff Hagener, Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here today in support of HB 38.

HB 38 was introduced at FWP's request to provide increased ability to manage big horn sheep, moose, and bison populations in Montana. Most hunters who pursue these species are interested in taking adult male animals for their trophy value and larger body size. Given the difficulty in drawing a permit, the waiting period after taking one of these species and the price of licenses, FWP is having more difficulty getting enough hunters to apply for and take big horn ewes and antlerless moose. We have concerns that the same problem could arise with cow/calf bison permits.

HB 38 gives the FWP Commission authority to reduce the price of licenses for female sheep, antlerless moose and cow/calf bison and exempts hunters who take one of these animals from the 7-year waiting period for a trophy animal. With this additional flexibility, the commission and department should be able to attract the number of hunters needed to manage these species.

An amendment offered to HB 38 by Representative Barrett at FWP's suggestion adds provisions to the original bill eliminating the prerequisite that non-resident hunters obtain an elk "A" license before they can purchase an antlerless elk "B" tag. This prerequisite means that, under current law, only a hunter who has already paid either \$643 or \$1195 for a bull tag can buy a cow tag for an additional \$273. During the past 2 years, FWP sold fewer than 125 elk "B" tags to non-residents. With Rep. Barrett's amendment, any non-resident will be able to purchase an elk "B" tag over-the-counter for \$273. This would make antlerless elk tags as accessible as antlerless deer tags, provide greater opportunity for non-residents to take antlerless elk and help manage elk populations that are over management objective.

HB 38 will enable the Department to manage ungulate populations more precisely. We urge the committee's support of this bill.